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OBAMA APPROVAL RATINGS ON THE RISE AMONG MILLENNIALS, ESPECIALLY ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES, HARVARD POLL FINDS

*Facebook and other social media tools viewed as having
greater political impact than in-person advocacy*

Washington, D.C. – A new national poll of America’s 18 to 29 year olds by Harvard’s Institute of Politics (IOP), located at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, now finds a majority of Millennials (55%) approve of the job performance of President Barack Obama, a rise of six percentage points from IOP polling conducted last October. The President’s job approval rating among students on four-year college campuses – now 60% – increased even more (nine percentage points) over the same period.

In addition to finding continued growth for Facebook among Millennials in the last year (80% of all 18-29 year olds and 90% of four-year college students now have a Facebook account), the poll also reveals a plurality (27%) of Millennials believe online tools like Facebook, Twitter, blogs and YouTube make more of an impact than in-person advocacy (16%) when advocating for a political position. A detailed report on the poll’s findings is available on the Institute’s homepage at www.iop.harvard.edu.

“As the 2012 presidential primary and caucus season draws closer, young people will again have the opportunity to greatly impact the race for the White House,” said Harvard’s Institute of Politics Director Trey Grayson. “Political campaigns which incorporate an effective youth outreach strategy will have a strong advantage in the 2012 cycle.”

“What’s been proven in 2008 and in the events in the Middle East of late, is that young adults can make the difference when inspired,” said John Della Volpe, Director of Polling for the Institute of Politics. “And before inspiration happens, it’s important to understand how Millennials communicate – providing this perspective is what we aim to do every semester with our national research project.”

The web-enabled survey of 3,018 18-29 year-old U.S. citizens with a margin of error of +/- 2.4 percentage points (95% confidence level) conducted with research partner Knowledge Networks for the IOP between February 11 and March 2, 2011 finds –

- ***Job approval ratings have risen for President Obama, especially among college youth.*** America’s 18 to 29 year olds believe the overall job performance of President Barack Obama has improved since the IOP’s October 2010 poll. After three consecutive Institute polls showing falling approval ratings among all Millennials, the President’s job approval now stands at 55%, 6 percentage points higher than it was in the Fall of 2010 (49%) and close to the level of February 2010 polling (56%). President Obama’s job

performance increased even more (60%: Feb. 2011; 51%: Oct. 2010) over the past five months among four-year college students.

- ***Economy remains the top national issue of concern and source of anxiety among 18 to 29 year olds.*** The overall personal financial situation for Millennials has not improved over the past year. In February 2010 IOP polling, when asked to rate their personal financial situation 45% of Millennials believed their situation was “very” or “fairly bad.” Asked the same question in February 2011, 43% said the same with 55% describing theirs as “very or fairly good.” Currently, 56% of Millennials report they are working as a paid employee, 4% are self employed and 22% are looking for work. When four-year college students were asked how easy or difficult it would be for members of their class to find permanent jobs after graduation, only 17% said it would be “easy” with 82% indicating it would be “difficult,” similar to February 2010 IOP polling findings. As seen in October 2010 IOP polling, a majority (57%: Feb. 2011; 53%: Oct. 2010) said economic issues are their top concern, far outpacing the next highest issue (health care: 10%).
- ***Facebook adoption continues to rise, outpaces Twitter by more than three-to-one.*** Over the past year, Millennial Facebook adoption has grown significantly from 64% to 80% (90% adoption among four-year college students), while MySpace has shed six percentage points over the same period. Although Twitter is clearly a less relevant tool for young adults than Facebook, Twitter accounts among young adults also rose over the past year from 15% to 24%.
- ***Social media tools viewed as having a greater political impact than in-person advocacy.*** Among all Millennials, 27% percent reported that compared to in-person advocacy, they believe that "advocating for a political position by using online tools like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and YouTube" makes more of an impact – while only 16 percent said it made less of an impact. Approximately one-quarter (24%) believe the impact is about the same and one-third (33%) either did not know or did not answer the question.
- ***Nearly twice as many Millennials view community service as “honorable” compared to running for office.*** While nearly seven-in-ten (69%) young adults view community service as an “honorable thing to do,” only about half that number (36%) believe the same about running for office. These findings have not changed significantly in the last year, when 70% found community service honorable and 35% viewed running for office the same in February 2010 IOP polling.
- ***Millennials are not optimistic about the United States’ role in the world.*** America’s young adults are fairly pessimistic over the U.S.’ place in the world in the next ten years, with 31% saying they believe it will be “worse” and only 23% saying it will be better than it is today. More Millennials believe the U.S.’ diplomatic standing (17%, “will be better;” 24%, “will be worse”) and economic standing (29%, “will be better;” 30%, “will be worse”) will be worse than the proportion saying they will improve. However, nearly one-quarter of Millennials (24%) believe the U.S. military’s standing in the world will improve over the same period with only 15% saying it will get worse.

- ***America’s 18 to 29 year olds look first to major national newspapers – followed by “Facebook Friend” statuses – to track 2012 presidential campaign.*** Major national newspapers, by far, were considered the most preferred sources for political news and information, with 49% of 18 to 29 year olds and 60% of four-year college students reporting that they are interested in receiving information from this source. Regarding various new technologies and social media channels, interest was next greatest in friends who share using Facebook (36%), official campaign Facebook feeds (29%), partisan, political blogging websites (22%), text or mobile alerts (19%), friends who share using Twitter (16%) and official campaign Twitter feeds (16%).

Harvard students designed the poll in consultation with IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe, whose firm *SocialSphere, Inc.* commissioned Knowledge Networks to conduct the survey. Complete results, are available – along with past surveys – online at www.iop.harvard.edu.

Methodology

Knowledge Networks conducted a study of young adults on political issues on behalf of Harvard University’s Institute of Politics. The goal of the project was to collect 3,000 completed interviews with young Americans between 18 and 29 years old. Approximately 2,100 cases were to be collected on the KnowledgePanel® with the remaining 900 coming from an opt-in panel sample source. The main sample data collection took place from February 11 to March 2, 2011. A small pretest was conducted prior to the main survey to examine the accuracy of the data and the length of the interview.

Three thousand, six hundred and twenty-six (3,626) KnowledgePanel members were assigned to the study. The cooperation rate was 57.7 percent resulting in 2,091 completed interviews. One hundred sixty eight (168) interviews were conducted in Spanish with the remainder done in English. For the opt-in data source, 927 interviews were completed; the cooperation rate was 4.9 percent.

The web-enabled KnowledgePanel® is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Initially, participants are chosen scientifically by a random selection of telephone numbers and residential addresses. Persons in selected households are then invited by telephone or by mail to participate in the web-enabled KnowledgePanel®. For those who agree to participate, but do not already have Internet access, Knowledge Networks provides a laptop and ISP connection at no cost. People who already have computers and Internet service are permitted to participate using their own equipment. Panelists then receive unique log-in information for accessing surveys online, and are sent e-mails throughout each month inviting them to participate in research. More technical information is available at <http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/reviewer-info.html> and by request to the IOP.

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Harvard University’s Institute of Politics (IOP), located at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, was established in 1966 as a memorial to President Kennedy. The IOP’s mission is to unite and engage students, particularly undergraduates, with academics, politicians, activists, and policymakers on a non-partisan basis to inspire them to consider careers in politics and public service. The Institute strives to promote greater understanding and cooperation between the academic world and the world of politics and public affairs. More information is available online at www.iop.harvard.edu.

Knowledge Networks delivers quality and service to guide leaders in business, government, and academia – uniquely bringing scientifically valid research to the online space through its probability-based, online KnowledgePanel®. The company delivers unique study design, science, analysis, and panel maintenance, along with a commitment to close collaboration at every stage of the research process. Knowledge Networks leverages its expertise in brands, media, advertising, and public policy issues to provide insights that speak directly to clients’ most important concerns. For more information about Knowledge Networks, visit www.knowledgenetworks.com.